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WASHINGTON.

SECRETARY BOWTELL'S POLICY—THE PURCHASED BONDS TO BE HELD AS A SINKING FUND—CONTRADICTORY CUBAN REPORTS—DISSEMINATING TONGUE DUTIES—THE PURCHASE OF SUPPLIES FOR THE INDIAN BUREAU—RESIGNATION OF A LARGE NUMBER OF THE NEWLY-APPOINTED CONSULS.

(BY TELEGRAPH TO THE TRIBUNE.)
WASHINGTON, Thursday, May 13, 1869.
Secretary Bowtell today said that he intends to stamp on all bonds purchased and returned to the Department the statement that they are the property of the United States, held as a sinking fund under the law of 1862.

Secretary Fish some time ago addressed a communication to the Consul at Havana, instructing him to ascertain from our consular agents at other parts of the island, and from any other trustworthy sources, the exact status and strength of the insurgent party, and what are its chances of success.

Yesterday the Secretary received voluminous dispatches from Consul Plumb, who states that it is almost impossible to arrive at a correct estimate of the force under the Cuban leaders. The Consul incloses a letter from a prominent American merchant residing in the interior who estimates the whole Cuban army at from 15,000 to 20,000 men. This includes detached parties acting as guerrillas as well as the regular force. A letter inclosed by the Consul from another American merchant states that the entire effective force of Cubans does not amount to more than 1,400 men.

Regarding these two statements the Consul writes: "The truth probably lies between the two extremes. I do not think the Cuban army amounts to 25,000 men, but it is certainly more than 1,400." In another part of his dispatch Mr. Plumb says: "From all that can be ascertained there is not a Cuban man, woman, or child, on the island who does not sympathize with the insurrection. Some of them do this more openly than others, but they are all animated with a bitter hate toward Spain." This is the most hopeful sign of the Cuban cause, and if the insurgents are able to hold out six months longer Spain will be compelled to abandon the attempt to subdue them.

Discriminating tonnage duties are laid against American vessels in the Spanish West Indian ports. Under our legislation, the same discrimination is made in our ports against Spanish vessels. It bears very lightly on them, while on our commerce the tax is onerous, as the value of our trade with Cuba and Porto Rico more than equals that of all other nations.

By a royal decree, dated June 4, 1868, it was provided that the vessels of all nations conceding equal privileges to Spanish ships, should be placed on the same footing as regards tonnage duties, in her West Indian ports. Last Winter, Mr. Lynch of Maine called the attention of Congress to the subject, and the result was the passage of a law repealing previous acts bearing on the subject and admitting Spanish vessels to equal privileges conditional upon the same being accorded to us, and a circular was issued, March 6, by the Treasury Department, announcing the law.

The Spanish Government had removed the discrimination six months before. Great Britain, France, and other nations had availed themselves of the same. Our condition could not be complied with, according to "red tape," because the thing was already done. The Secretary of State (Mr. Seward) proposed to Minister Roberts, April 15, that his Government be communicated with, and that on a certain day a telegraphic reply be arranged announcing the removal of tonnage discriminations from our commerce, upon the receipt of which the President would, on the same day, issue a proclamation announcing the removal of the same duties from Spanish vessels.

No answer has been received to this owing, it is believed, to the delicate nature of our relations with that Government. Mr. Lynch presented the subject to the Secretary of the Treasury whose common sense at once cut the diplomatic puzzle. It was decided to immediately issue instructions to Collectors of Customs, announcing that, in consideration of the decree of June last, relieving American vessels of the discriminating tax, and in accordance with the late law, hereafter no such tax or duty will be levied on Spanish vessels entering ports of the United States.

Upon communicating this fact to the Spanish Minister, there can be no doubt that our shipping will be placed in the Cuban and other ports upon a footing with those of the most favored nations. The tax is \$1 a ton, in gold, and the loss to our merchants is about \$1,000,000 annually.

A plan is being matured at the War Department to draw the supplies for the Indian Bureau from the Commissary and Quartermaster's Departments, using the supplies now on hand in those Departments, and thus obviating the necessity of making purchases in the open market, except for such articles as are not to be found in the Government stores. It will be remembered that President Grant recommended the transfer of the Indian Bureau to the War Department, but Congress declined to accede to his request.

He has, however, so manipulated the Bureau as virtually to have accomplished his purpose, having put an army officer at the head of the Bureau, and secured the assignment of army officers as Indian Agents.

Secretary Fish is in receipt of letters from persons who are appointed Consuls, and who have received their instructions, declining the places, because they ascertain that they cannot travel abroad from place to place. When they applied for consularships they misapprehended their duties. It is the opinion of the Secretary that at least one-half of the consulates lately filled will be vacated in six months.

The following protest, signed by 350 mechanics, and other employees of the Washington Navy-Yard, was forwarded to the Secretary of the Navy, yesterday, through the commandant:

"We, the undersigned workmen in the Washington Navy-Yard, respectfully protest against the reduction of our pay to the standard of eight hours for eight hours' labor, and accept it with the understanding that we will demand the balance (two-fifths) due us at the hands of Congress, or through the Court of Claims.

Similar protests have been or will be sent from all the Navy-Yards in the country. Joseph H. Tait has been appointed postal clerk on the route between Washington and New-York, vice A. Ritchie, removed.

Ex-Senator Wade is made a permanent Director of the Pacific Railroad, instead of a Commissioner. A delegation of colored men and a committee from the late Virginia Convention had interviews with the President to-day. Mr. Howard, Minister to China, and Col. Markbreit, Minister to Bolivia, paid their farewell visits to the President, previous to their departure for their duties.

An order was issued to-day, from the Navy Department, instructing commandants of Navy-Yards not to make any distinction on account of race or color in the employment of caulkers or other laborers.

The proprietors of the National Theater in this city have entered suit for \$2,000 against the agent of Miss Kellogg, for his failure to fulfill a contract made by a sub-agent, to give a concert on Monday evening last.

The General Land Office, was to-day, appointed Postmaster of this city.

Acting Commissioner Douglas has written a letter to the Hon. John A. Rawlinson, Secretary of War, in reply to a letter informing him that parties in Raleigh have been selling tobacco stamps, and that he had caused the arrest of one of the sellers. In reply, the Acting Commissioner says the selling of stamps, fraudulent, forged or counterfeited stamps is made an offense punishable by a fine and imprisonment under the Internal Revenue Act of 1864, as amended by the Acts of 1866 and 1868. In fact, the stamps sold in Raleigh are claimed to be, and are, genuine Government stamps. The law does not in so many words in direct terms prohibit the sale of stamps by persons other than Collectors or the purchase of such stamps from persons other than Collectors. It was however clearly the intention of Congress to limit the sale and purchase of tobacco stamps to a Collector of Internal Revenue.

Under the provisions of the law, is authorized to furnish stamps only to Collectors, who are the only persons authorized to sell stamps. The sale of stamps by any other person is an unauthorized sale, and the purchase of such stamps from persons other than Collectors is a violation of the law. They cannot sell to any one, but only to manufacturers, importers, and such other persons as are required by law to affix stamps to unstamped goods before selling or offering them for sale. Collectors are not authorized to sell stamps to any one, but only to manufacturers and importers, and such other persons as are required by law to affix stamps to unstamped goods before selling or offering them for sale.

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for brevet promotion by reason of distinguished conduct and public service in the face of the enemy, they cannot now be commissioned by brevet. The circumstance that their nominations were pending before the Senate prior to the date of the act does not relieve them from its operations. These nominations were not appointments. To constitute the latter required the issue of commissions in pursuance of the previous nomination and confirmation thereof by the Senate; but the authority to commission in these cases was, it appears, away by the statute even before the act of March 3, 1869.

It would seem, however, that the other nominations mentioned, which were made and confirmed for meritorious service in recent campaigns with the Indians, are within the act, and consistently with its provisions, brevet commissions may be issued to the officers designated therein. The only point which suggests itself in connection with the branch of the subject, is whether promotions made during Indian hostilities may be viewed as conferred in time of war in the meaning of the law? That Indian tribes are capable of maintaining peace and war with the United States is recognized in numerous treaties made with them, and accordingly there is justified break-out between any of these tribes and the Government, a state of war with propriety may be said to exist. Thus, the act of April 20, third section, made a provision for the pay of militia called into service in prosecuting the war with the Seminoles tribe of Indians; so that brevet promotion made during Indian hostilities may be viewed as conferred in time of war in the meaning of the statute. I have the honor to be, very respectfully, Sir, your obedient servant.

E. R. HOAR, Attorney-General.

THE FRESHET IN THE MISSISSIPPI.

THE RIVER WITHIN TWO INCHES OF HIGH WATER.

NEW-ORLEANS, May 13.—The crevasse reported several days ago at Valler's plantation, below the city, has been abandoned as hopeless. The repairs by the negro soldiers and plantation hands wasted away as fast as constructed. The opening was 80 feet wide, and eight feet in depth, at last accounts, and is increasing. Another crevasse occurred only a half mile below the city last evening, but a company of negro soldiers, who were promptly sent from the barracks, closed the gap and strengthened the levee. The water is about twelve inches below high water mark. It is driven by high north-west winds coming above the mark. The wharves at the head of Pryor and Fayette-sts. are submerged. Considerable alarm is felt, and a strict watch is kept on the levees on the city front.

The steamers Virginia and Louisiana report that a serious crevasse occurred on Sunday, west of Baton Rouge Parish, nearly opposite Port Hudson. The *Baton Rouge* arrived at Monday says this crevasse caused a serious loss of life and property. The water was driven by high north-west winds coming above the mark. The wharves at the head of Pryor and Fayette-sts. are submerged. Considerable alarm is felt, and a strict watch is kept on the levees on the city front.

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